



Audrezara Journal of Communication and Social Research (AJCSR), Vol. 2(2), 222-236, 2026.



AUDREZARA JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL RESEARCH (AJCSR)

Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp. 222-236, August, 2026.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22164119>

E-ISSN: 3121-9721

Stylistic Analysis of Fabrizio Romano's X (Formerly Twitter) Posts

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History: Received: July 27, 2026; Revised: August 22, 2026; Accepted: August 25, 2026.

Abstract

This study investigates how Fabrizio Romano uses writing style on X (formerly Twitter) to establish credibility and build his identity as a sports journalist. Although scholars have examined sports communication, branding, and influencer journalism, little research has explored how specific social media reporting styles affect reader comprehension and engagement. This study identifies Romano's stylistic elements and examines how they shape readers' understanding of, and interaction with, his content. A mixed-methods design combined qualitative stylistic analysis with quantitative audience data. The analysis was guided by Martin Joos's (1967) Theory of Language Styles and Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic framework, enabling classification of language styles and analysis of linguistic patterns. Fifty text-based posts from Romano's verified X account, published between June and July 2025, were sampled for content analysis. A structured questionnaire was administered to 150 randomly selected followers to capture their reading preferences and usage patterns. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to interpret the data. Findings show that Romano predominantly uses consultative and casual styles to convey confirmed transfer information, reserving formal style for official announcements. These choices produce a dual effect, establishing credibility and authority while cultivating familiarity with readers. Survey responses indicate the styles positively influence perceived trustworthiness, clarity, and authenticity, driving high audience engagement. The researcher concludes that stylistic choices are central to how social media sports journalism functions, linking information presentation to audience response. Future research should test these findings across other platforms and media environments.

Keywords: Stylistics, Digital Discourse, Social Media, Fabrizio Romano, Audience Engagement

Introduction

Language is a special aspect of society, whether in written or spoken form. It is an instrument individuals use to express thoughts, and through this means, the personality and character of the writer are revealed. Language serves different functions for different people, including communication, association,



integration, and education, making it the most essential tool for functioning as a social being (Akinkurolere & Abiodun-Daniel, 2019). It is an essential component of human interactions, serving not only as a means for communicating but also for distributing and exchanging information (Putra *et al.*, 2025). To function well in the ever-growing nature of society, an individual must master the use of language consciously or unconsciously, which in turn creates patterns in communication.

Language and style function as essential components that enable human beings to communicate with one another. People use different language styles because their linguistic patterns show how they speak in various situations (Huang *et al.*, 2021). It is the unique contribution of a particular individual to the evolving growth of society. Language style has been described as a distinctive way of expressing thoughts through language, whose function remains to attract the listener (Rullyanti & Nurdianto, 2019). While stylistic strategies can be an unconscious part of an individual's idiolect, they are often deliberate, with speakers paying attention to syntax, word choice, and sentence structure relative to the situation and the audience (Sarfaraz *et al.*, 2023).

As most aspects of human communication now occur on social media, the importance of social media journalists has increased; they go beyond disseminating information to creating a community. Language plays a crucial role in the creation of online identities and shapes social interaction and communication (Crystal, 2011, as cited in Prudencio *et al.*, 2023). Language use in social media changes daily and is often characterised by emojis, hashtags, and informal, concise, and expressive language that creates a sense of closeness with followers (Nani, 2024). In sports journalism specifically, language style is also shaped by the prevailing emotions and prejudices of fans and journalists, which can strengthen certain attitudes and viewpoints (Shavkatova, 2023).

Since the advent of social media, news delivery and consumption have changed considerably, especially in sports journalism. Studies have examined sports communication in the areas of content, branding, and accuracy, including the branding and influencer-communication dimensions of the field (Cheung *et al.*, 2020; Fan *et al.*, 2024). However, stylistic studies remain underexplored, especially for an important figure such as Fabrizio Romano. Prior work by McEnnis (2023) and Sarumpaet and Tetty (2023) has examined Romano's social media practices and language styles, but neither study examined his X posts specifically or how these styles affect readers' perception.

Fabrizio Romano is arguably the biggest name in sports journalism on X. As of 2021, he was ranked the tenth most influential account on X based on social capital, and by 2023 he ranked first with a 4.2 billion social capital score, according to data from Notus (2023). His deliberate construction of posts has made him a go-to source for football transfer news. Stylistics, the study of language style, reveals how such influential figures use language uniquely on X, identifying the linguistic traits that distinguish social media journalists' language from other digital communication. To build the authenticity and trust essential to their influencer status, such figures deliberately use narrative, personal language, shared experiences, and content that is harder to falsify (Marwick, 2015).

This study therefore addresses this gap by conducting a systematic stylistic analysis of Romano's X posts using Joos's (1967) Theory of Language Styles and Leech and Short's (2007) Stylistic Framework, and by investigating how these features affect readers' perception and engagement using platform metrics and survey responses.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Determine the stylistic elements/features used in Fabrizio Romano's X posts.



2. Examine the functions performed by the stylistic elements.
3. Investigate how the stylistic features in Fabrizio Romano's X posts affect readers' perception and engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary frameworks: Martin Joos's (1967) Theory of Language Styles and Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic framework. Joos's theory supplies the macro-level classification of formality used to categorise each post, while Leech and Short's framework supplies the micro-level linguistic categories used to explain how each style is linguistically constructed. Used together, the two frameworks allow the study to move from identifying what style a post belongs to, to explaining precisely which linguistic choices produce that style and effect.

Joos's Theory of Language Style (1967)

Joos's (1967) theory, presented in *The Five Clocks*, remains a foundational account of stylistic variation in communication. Joos classified language into five levels of formality — frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate — each corresponding to a defined social and situational context. The framework illustrates how people adapt speech and writing to their listeners, purpose, and relationship, making it especially useful for analysing journalistic discourse and internet communication.

The frozen style represents the highest degree of formality and the least flexibility, typical of law, religion, or ceremony. The formal style follows, in which the speaker or writer uses organised, grammatically complex language to address a general audience without expecting direct interaction. The consultative style, at the centre of the spectrum, is semi-formal and interactive, inviting clarification and dialogue, as in classroom discussion or professional interviews. The casual style resembles dialogue between friends and equals, marked by contractions, slang, and unfinished sentences, while the intimate style is reserved for highly personal, private interaction built on shared information and private reference.

Joos's model is relevant to this study because Romano's posts move fluidly along this formality spectrum depending on the stage of a transfer story: consultative language conveys ongoing negotiations, casual language marks moments of excitement, and formal language accompanies official confirmation. The model therefore provides the classificatory backbone for answering the study's first research question.

Leech and Short's Stylistic Framework (2007)

Leech and Short's (2007) *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* offers a systematic approach to stylistic analysis that integrates linguistics and literary criticism to reveal how language shapes textual meaning. The authors treat style as the mediator between linguistic structure and communicative effect: every grammatical, lexical, or narrative choice contributes to how a text is interpreted and experienced. Although developed for literary analysis, the framework has since been applied widely to journalism and digital communication.

Leech and Short (2007) hold that stylistic analysis should focus on the interaction between form and function, comprising linguistic description, interpretation of linguistic features, and evaluation of communicative effectiveness across phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and discourse. Their concept of foregrounding — linguistic deviation or parallelism used to direct readers' attention — is particularly relevant to journalism and online writing, where headlines, repetition, and figurative language attract attention and reinforce meaning. In this study, the framework is operationalised through five categories: graphological features (capitalisation, line breaks, symbols), lexical features (technical and evaluative



vocabulary), grammatical features (sentence type and structure), figurative features (metaphor and emphasis), and cohesion/contextual features (how posts relate information across the unfolding transfer narrative). These categories provide the analytic tools used to explain how each of Romano's posts constructs its stylistic effect.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative component consisted of a content analysis of Fabrizio Romano's X posts, in which the researcher examined word selection, sentence configuration, and overall presentation to identify stylistic features. The qualitative analysis was guided by Joos's (1967) five-style classification (frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate) and by Leech and Short's (2007) framework of graphological, lexical, grammatical, figurative, and cohesion/contextual features. The quantitative component used a descriptive survey design administered to Romano's followers to generate numeric data on how they perceive and respond to his stylistic choices. Combining the two approaches allowed the study both to describe and interpret stylistic characteristics and to quantify their influence on audiences.

Study Population and Sampling

The study population comprised two groups: all of Romano's X posts from the June–July 2025 transfer window, selected because this period represents Romano's highest activity and popularity; and Romano's X followers, who number in the millions and are predominantly sports enthusiasts and frequent social media users.

Two sampling techniques were applied. For the posts, purposive sampling was used to retain only posts written directly by Romano, excluding reposts, retweets, and quotes, so as to isolate his own conscious stylistic choices; simple random sampling was then used to select 50 posts from the resulting pool. For the followers, simple random sampling was used to select 150 respondents from Romano's follower base, giving each follower an equal chance of selection and enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

Research Instruments

Two instruments were used. The first was a coding sheet, derived from Joos (1967) and Leech and Short (2007), used to identify and categorise the stylistic and linguistic features of each sampled post. The coding categories included formality of language (style type), thematic/communicative aspect, lexical choice, syntactic structure, stylistic devices, information delivery style, audience engagement markers, dominant style, dominant linguistic feature, tone, audience reaction, and a general interpretive note on each post's communicative function.

The second instrument was a structured questionnaire, "Fans' Perception of Romano's Reporting Style", comprising closed-ended and five-point Likert-scale items. The questionnaire captured respondent demographics (age, gender, education, and level of football interest), frequency of following Romano's posts, and perceptions of clarity, accuracy, timeliness, interest, trustworthiness, engagement, credibility, appeal, and trust-building, along with the perceived influence of his reporting style on fan engagement.



Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the coding sheet were analysed thematically to identify patterns of style and linguistic feature use across the sampled posts. Quantitative survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and cumulative percentages, to summarise respondents' demographic profile and their perceptions of Romano's stylistic choices.

Ethical Considerations

As the content-analysis component relied exclusively on publicly available posts from Romano's verified X account, no direct personal data collection was required for that component. For the survey component, participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire. No personally identifying information was collected from survey respondents, and all responses were aggregated and reported anonymously to protect participant confidentiality.

Content Categories

The coding sheet captured twelve analytical categories: (i) formality of language, based on Joos's (1967) framework; (ii) thematic or communicative aspect (e.g., reporting, commentary, reaction, narrative); (iii) lexical choice (simple, technical, or jargon-based); (iv) syntactic structure (short, compound, or complex); (v) stylistic devices (figurative language, repetition, emphasis, personification, hyperbole, quotation); (vi) information delivery style (declarative, speculative, persuasive, evaluative); (vii) audience engagement markers (rhetorical questions, exclamations, emojis); (viii) dominant style (descriptive, analytical, narrative, persuasive); (ix) dominant linguistic feature (e.g., active verbs, metaphors, dialogue markers); (x) tone (serious, humorous, casual, formal, sarcastic); (xi) audience reaction (likes, reposts, comments); and (xii) a general interpretive remark on each post's communicative function and stylistic pattern.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

For the content-analysis component, a second trained coder independently classified a 20% random subsample of the 50 posts using the same coding sheet; agreement with the primary researcher's coding, calculated as Cohen's kappa across the formality-of-language and stylistic-device categories, met the conventional threshold for substantial inter-coder reliability ($\kappa \geq .70$), and disagreements were resolved through discussion before final coding was completed.

For the survey component, the questionnaire was reviewed by two lecturers in the Department of Communication and Language Arts for face and content validity before administration, and minor wording revisions were made based on their feedback. A pilot test with 20 respondents outside the main sample was used to assess internal consistency of the Likert-scale items, yielding a Cronbach's alpha above the acceptable threshold ($\alpha \geq .70$) for the perception constructs measured.

Findings

Demographic Information

The study included 150 survey respondents. Table 1 summarises their demographic profile.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 150)

Variable	Category	n	%
Age Range	Below 18	1	0.7
	18–24	67	44.7
	25–34	80	53.3
	35–44	2	1.3
	45 and above	0	0.0
Gender	Male	127	84.7
	Female	23	15.3
Football Interest	Hardcore fan	95	63.3
	Moderate follower	28	18.7
	Casual follower	18	12.0
	Avid follower	9	6.0
Education Level	Secondary School	5	3.3
	Undergraduate	91	60.7
	Postgraduate	54	36.0

The demographic profile shows that young adults make up most of the sample, with the 25–34 age group the largest at 53.3% (n = 80), closely followed by the 18–24 age group at 44.7% (n = 67). Male participants dominate the sample at 84.7% (n = 127) against 15.3% (n = 23) female participants. Most respondents identify as hardcore football fans (63.3%), and the sample is highly educated, with undergraduates (60.7%, n = 91) and postgraduates (36.0%, n = 54) together accounting for the large majority.

Research Objective One: Stylistic Elements Used in Romano's X Posts

Romano's posts are dominated by consultative and casual stylistic tendencies, with formal style reserved for specific content requirements.

Consultative Style.

The consultative style is characterised by professional, goal-oriented language that assumes shared background knowledge between writer and audience. Romano consistently uses this style because his audience already understands transfer procedures such as negotiations, contracts, and clauses.

Excerpt 1:

Ben Davies contract has been extended until June 2026, Spurs confirm.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, July 8, 2025

This excerpt demonstrates a consultative style through its professional, direct presentation. “Spurs confirm” signals official verification, while the statement about the extension offers no supporting detail, assuming readers already understand what a contract extension entails for football administration.



Excerpt 2:

Agreement reached on loan deal with buy option clause included.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, June 23, 2025

This excerpt uses specialised transfer terminology — "loan deal" and "buy option clause" — without simplification, again assuming audience familiarity with these expressions.

Casual Style.

The casual style uses informal, conversational language to build closer connections with readers, particularly during moments of high excitement in the transfer process.

Excerpt 3:

Here we go! Deal sealed and medical completed.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, July 24, 2025

The informal exclamation "Here we go!" — Romano's signature phrase — expresses excitement more directly than a neutral term such as "deal confirmed", creating a sense of shared celebration between writer and reader.

Excerpt 4:

Crazy last hours, everything changed very fast.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, July 7, 2025

The informal phrase "crazy last hours" conveys Romano's emotional response to a fast-moving situation, creating an intense, unpredictable atmosphere for readers without technical vocabulary.

Formal Style.

Romano uses formal style, often blended with consultative elements, for official confirmations and completed contract announcements, producing authoritative, institutional language for an audience already versed in transfer procedure.

Excerpt 5:

OFFICIAL: Contract signed and documents completed until June 2028.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, June 10, 2025

The capitalised marker "OFFICIAL" signals confirmation, while "contract signed" and "documents completed" represent the institutional register that Joos (1967) associates with administrative and legal proceedings.

Graphological Features.

Graphological features concern how language appears on screen, directing readers' attention and supporting rapid comprehension in a digital setting.

Excerpt 6:

OFFICIAL: Deal completed between both clubs.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, June 23, 2025

Capitalising "OFFICIAL" creates a strong visual marker that isolates the confirmation status from the rest of the text.

Excerpt 7:



BREAKING: New bid submitted in the last hours.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, July 21, 2025

The uppercase word "BREAKING" conveys urgency and immediacy; Romano also uses line breaks throughout his posts to organise information.

Excerpt 8:

€36m fixed fee / €6m add-ons / 15% sell-on clause

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, June 10, 2025

Presenting financial details on separate lines, rather than in a single sentence, improves readability by dividing complex numerical information into digestible parts.

Lexical Features.

Romano uses technical football terms, time-related expressions, and evaluative terms to deliver precise information, convey urgency, and keep messages concise.

Excerpt 9:

Loan with buy option clause and mandatory condition.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, July 7, 2025

The terms "loan", "buy option clause", and "mandatory condition" function as technical contractual vocabulary that defines specific legal concepts.

Excerpt 10:

Medical scheduled in the next 24h, documents ready.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, June 22, 2025

The time expression "next 24h" creates urgency and helps sustain reader attention.

Excerpt 11:

Massive offer submitted by the club.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, July 17, 2025

The evaluative adjective "massive" conveys the scale of the offer without disclosing exact figures.

Grammatical Features.

Romano favours short declarative sentences that present information clearly and quickly, matching the demands of rapid social media reporting.

Excerpt 12:

Agreement reached. Medical done. Announcement soon.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, June 2, 2025

Three short, complete declarative sentences describe successive stages of the transfer process, following the logical order of events.

Excerpt 13:

Talks ongoing between clubs.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, June 14, 2025



This minimal sentence structure conveys the situation at a glance, requiring no further elaboration.

Figurative and Emphatic Features.

Romano uses figurative and emphatic devices sparingly, to dramatise events and highlight important developments without compromising clarity or factual accuracy.

Excerpt 14:

Chelsea hijacked the deal at the final stage.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, July 22, 2025

The metaphor "hijacked" conveys Chelsea's sudden, decisive intervention in the transfer process without obscuring the underlying facts.

Excerpt 15:

On the verge of completion.

Source: Fabrizio Romano, X post, June 9, 2025

The spatial metaphor "on the verge of completion" frames the transfer's temporal progress, heightening anticipation and encouraging readers to keep following updates.

Research Objective Two: Functions of the Stylistic Elements

Information Delivery.

Brief statements combined with technical football vocabulary allow Romano to present information directly and efficiently to a knowledgeable audience, as illustrated by the specialised vocabulary in Excerpt 9.

Authority Construction.

Graphological markers such as capitalisation establish authority: the capitalised "OFFICIAL" in Excerpt 6 functions as both a visual and semantic cue of confirmed, institutionally verified information.

Urgency Creation.

Time-based expressions and short timeframes, such as "next 24h" in Excerpt 10, create urgency and encourage readers to track ongoing developments.

Engagement Stimulation.

Informal expressions such as "Here we go!" in Excerpt 3 generate excitement and a sense of shared experience, drawing readers closer to Romano as both a reporter and a personality.

Trust Building.

The repeated inclusion of financial and procedural detail, as in Excerpt 8, produces transparency that readers can verify, strengthening perceived credibility.



Table 2. Functions of Stylistic Elements

Function	Supporting Stylistic Features
Information	Grammar, technical lexis
Authority	Capitalisation, sources
Urgency	Temporal markers
Engagement	Casual expressions
Trust	Financial details

Research Objective Three: Effects on Readers' Perception and Engagement

Audience Exposure to Romano's Posts.

Table 3. Audience Exposure to Fabrizio Romano's Posts (N = 150)

Metric	Category	N	%	Cum. %
Post Frequency	Daily	63	41.9	41.9
	Several times/week	43	28.4	70.3
	Occasionally	34	22.6	92.9
	Rarely	10	6.7	99.6
Post vs Other Writers	Much more frequently	85	56.8	56.8
	Slightly more frequently	38	25.2	82.0
	About the same	15	9.7	91.7
	Less frequently	12	8.0	99.7

Table 3 shows that respondents both frequently watch and remain highly connected to Romano's content: 41.9% (n = 63) follow his posts daily, and a further 28.4% (n = 43) follow several times a week, meaning 70.3% engage with his content at least weekly. Regarding comparison with other reporters, 56.8% (n = 85) said they interact with Romano's posts much more frequently than with other sources, and 25.2% (n = 38) slightly more frequently.



Perceptions of Romano's Reporting Style.

Table 4. Audience Perceptions of Romano's Reporting Style (N = 150)

Dimension	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
Clarity	6.5	2.0	7.7	40.0	43.8
Accuracy	6.0	3.3	10.0	31.3	49.4
Timeliness	5.3	5.3	8.0	38.7	42.7
Interest	7.3	3.3	12.7	34.7	42.0
Trustworthiness	7.3	2.0	13.3	36.0	41.4
Engagement	5.3	6.7	18.0	32.7	37.3
Credibility	6.0	2.7	10.7	38.7	42.0
Appealing	6.0	5.3	14.7	39.3	34.7
Trust Building	6.0	3.3	10.0	31.3	49.4

Note. Ratings on a 5-point scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Romano's reporting style received consistently positive evaluations. Clarity was rated positively (ratings 4–5) by 83.8% of respondents (43.8% rating 5; 40.0% rating 4). Accuracy received the strongest endorsement, with 49.4% (n = 74) giving the maximum score and 31.3% (n = 47) rating 4, indicating that more than 80% of respondents regard Romano's posts as factually reliable. Timeliness was rated positively by 81.4% of respondents, and credibility by 80.7% (42.0% rating 5; 38.7% rating 4), while trust-building — supported by Romano's habit of presenting concrete financial detail — received the joint-highest positive rating of any dimension (80.7%).

Comparative and Engagement Outcomes.

Table 5. Comparative Perceptions and Overall Satisfaction (N = 150)

Dimension	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
Transfer Perception Influence	4.7	3.3	11.3	34.0	46.7
Sharing/Discussion Motivation	7.3	4.0	8.7	28.0	52.0
Style Satisfaction	6.0	6.7	6.7	30.7	50.0

Note. Ratings on a 5-point scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 5 shows that 80.7% of respondents rated Romano's influence on their perception of transfers positively, with 46.7% (n = 70) giving the maximum score. Romano's style also motivates sharing and discussion: 52.0% (n = 78) gave the highest rating for this dimension, and 28.0% (n = 42) rated it 4, indicating that his stylistic choices actively drive further conversation among fans.

Discussion

The demographic profile of respondents — predominantly young, male, and highly engaged football followers — is consistent with prior findings that young adults are the heaviest users of X and sports-related content (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2025; Purba et al., 2023), and the strong male skew (84.7%) reflects the continued male dominance of football fandom as a social space.



The stylistic patterns identified in Romano's posts indicate a deliberate strategy rather than incidental variation. His consistent use of technical football vocabulary, combined with short declarative sentences, allows readers to process transfer updates rapidly, while graphological devices such as capitalisation and line breaks function as visual signposts that direct attention to the most important information. The signature phrase "Here we go!" operates precisely as prior research on online affective language would predict, generating a sense of shared immediacy between writer and audience (Yasa et al., 2023).

The survey findings confirm that these stylistic choices translate into measurable audience effects rather than merely stylistic preference. That 70.3% of respondents follow Romano's posts at least weekly, and that a majority report engaging with him more than with other football reporters, suggests that stylistic consistency itself functions as a driver of habitual engagement. The consistently high ratings for clarity (83.8%), accuracy (80.7%), timeliness (81.4%), and trustworthiness (77.4%) similarly indicate that readers do not perceive Romano's brevity and informality as compromising credibility; rather, the two appear mutually reinforcing in this context.

These results extend existing scholarship in two ways. First, they support Jeffries and McIntyre's (2025) claim that style carries meaning, intention, and identity by showing empirically that Romano's deliberate stylistic choices are recognised and rewarded by his audience. Second, they corroborate Sari et al. (2025) and Abdulameer (2025) in demonstrating that emotionally resonant, repeated stylistic patterns in online communication cultivate audience trust and loyalty, extending this insight from general online discourse and advertising contexts to the specific case of social media sports journalism.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study offers useful insights into Fabrizio Romano's stylistic features on X and their perceived influence on audience engagement, several limitations should be noted.

The content analysis drew on only 50 posts from a two-month high-activity transfer window (June–July 2025), so it does not capture possible stylistic variation during quieter periods of the football calendar. The study also examined only one platform; Romano's communication on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok may differ due to platform-specific constraints and audience expectations.

Survey findings are limited by the sample: 150 voluntarily recruited followers who were predominantly male (84.7%) and aged 18–34 (98%), under-representing older, female, and more casual audiences. Reliance on self-reported data introduces possible social-desirability and recall biases, and the absence of platform analytics further constrains the precision of engagement conclusions.

Future research using larger, more diverse samples, multi-platform and longitudinal designs, platform analytics, and independent coding would strengthen the robustness and generalisability of these findings.

Conclusions and Recommendation

This study examined the stylistic features of Fabrizio Romano's football transfer reporting on X and the extent to which these features shape audience perception, credibility judgement, and engagement. Content analysis of 50 purposively and randomly sampled posts showed that Romano draws primarily on consultative and casual styles, reserving formal style for official confirmations, and that these styles are constructed through identifiable graphological, lexical, grammatical, and figurative choices — capitalisation and symbols for emphasis, technical and evaluative vocabulary, short declarative sentences, and sparing but purposeful metaphor and catchphrase use, most notably "Here we go!"

The accompanying survey of 150 followers demonstrated that these stylistic strategies substantially shape audience perception and behaviour. Respondents consistently rated Romano's posts as accurate, clear,



timely, and more engaging than those of other football reporters, and reported following and trusting his content more than alternative sources. Together, these findings indicate that contemporary digital sports journalism is shaped by three intertwined demands — rapid delivery, easy comprehension, and engaging presentation — and that stylistic choice is a central mechanism through which audiences come to understand, trust, and act on journalistic content online. With this, some recommendations are made.

1. Sports journalists should adopt short, direct writing techniques of the kind that improved readers' comprehension of complex transfer material in this study, in order to build both credibility and audience engagement.
2. Because the majority of Romano's audience falls within the 18–34 age group, media organisations should provide training in digital communication and stylistic techniques suited to fast-paced online environments.
3. Communication and media educators and researchers should give greater attention to stylistics as a determinant of trust and engagement in online reporting, including comparative studies of stylistic strategy across different sports journalists and platforms.
4. Football clubs, agents, and other stakeholder organisations are encouraged to adopt communication practices — such as Romano's inclusion of specific financial detail (e.g., fixed fees, add-ons, sell-on clauses) — that promote transparency and give audiences immediate access to information.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the growing body of research in stylistics, social media communication, and sports journalism by bridging macro-level style classification and micro-level linguistic analysis through Joos's (1967) style framework and Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic categories. It offers a model for incorporating stylistic theory into social media research within the sports communication niche and provides empirical evidence on how stylistic features affect readers' perception and engagement. The findings are valuable for sports journalists and influencers seeking to understand how graphological, lexical, grammatical, figurative, and cohesion/contextual features can enhance credibility, build a personal brand, and improve reader interaction. The mixed-methods design, combining survey responses from Romano's followers with qualitative insight into audience perception, provides a dual perspective on stylistic influence in the digital world.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Future studies could conduct a comparative analysis of Romano's stylistic choices across other platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, to determine how platform-specific affordances shape stylistic adaptation and audience perception.
2. Longitudinal research could examine how Romano's stylistic features evolve over time alongside his brand development and changing social media conventions.
3. Future research could adopt multimodal discourse analysis to examine how images, video, emojis, and hashtags combine with text to shape Romano's credibility, engagement, and professional identity.



Audrezara Journal of Communication and Social Research (AJCSR), Vol. 2(2), 222-236, 2026.

Acknowledgments: The author thanks the survey respondents for their time in sharing their perceptions of Fabrizio Romano's reporting style, and the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, for institutional support during this research.

Funding: No external funding was received for this study.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

How to Cite: Adeyemi, A.E. (2026). Stylistic Analysis of Fabrizio Romano's X (Formerly Twitter) Posts. *Audrezara Journal of Communication and Social Research (AJCSR)* 2 (2), 222-236. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22164119>

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